



# The Emotional Challenges of Caregiving

Taking care of someone else can be challenging.  
Taking care of yourself in the process is often harder.

## What *is* emotional support?

Emotional support is when those around you say or do things that help *you* and offer encouragement and comfort during difficult times.

Support can come in many ways - from family, friends, religious organizations, support groups, caregiver chat rooms, or counselors.

It is important to find people and activities that help you feel better.

Caring for others is filled with many mixed and varied emotions such as feelings of love, loss, anger, affection, sadness, frustration, and guilt.

It's not uncommon for family caregivers to feel lonely and isolated. It takes a lot of physical, mental, spiritual, *and emotional* energy to care for a loved one.

Caregivers often experience a higher rate of stress, anxiety, and depression than those who aren't caregivers.

You've probably heard it before – you need to take care of yourself! That can seem overwhelming and often requires energy and support to help make some changes.

## The Importance of Emotional Support

It's important for you to feel emotionally supported. Current research is clear that those who get emotional support while caregiving fare far better and provide care longer than those who don't.

Family and friends, while a valuable emotional support system for some, may not always be available or particularly helpful now. This is not unusual. Changing family roles, unresolved past family dynamics, and stress brought on by your loved one's health, can strain even the best of support systems and relationships.

## Expanding Your Emotional Support Network

You may need more or a different kind of emotional support than your current support network can offer. What could help you feel more supported?

- A few hours for yourself?
- More information about your loved one's disease or condition?
- Getting some help solving caregiving problems?
- A sympathetic ear ... someone who can listen without judging?
- Spending time with others, especially those in similar situations?

If any of these things would help you feel more supported, there is good news. A variety of family caregiver support services offer this kind of emotional support, information, and knowledgeable advice.

*"Thank you so much for helping me deal with my mother's illness, and helping me understand the way to handle daily problems and to take care of myself on a daily basis."*

*"What helps most is the occasional call from my caregiver advocate. It's those moments I don't feel so alone, someone is out there with help and support, and services if I need them. Thank you."*

*"If it hadn't been for the Powerful Tools for Caregiving class, I would have gone over the edge."*

*"The Family Caregiver Support Program has been a godsend for us! It has given me a few hours a week [respite] to regroup and renew my spirit. This has made me a better caregiver, which benefits both my husband and myself."*



## Family Caregiver Information, Assistance, and Consultation

Experienced caregiver specialists or advocates offer you practical advice and emotional support. Either in person or by phone, these professionals listen to your questions and concerns and understand the challenges you face.

They can provide information about chronic conditions and diseases and help identify resources, services, and support options in your community for you and your family member.

## Family Caregiver Counseling

A counselor can help you learn to cope more effectively with the emotional demands, or even depression, that can result from caregiving. They can help you work through feelings of grief and loss, problem solve difficult relationships or situations, and work through any stress, anger, and guilt related to caregiving.

## Training

*Powerful Tools for Caregiving* is an example of one educational series developed specifically for family members caring for someone with a chronic illness. You will learn a variety of self-care tools and strategies to reduce your stress, communicate more effectively with family and healthcare providers, deal with difficult feelings, and make tough caregiving decisions.

## Caregiver Support Groups

Support groups offer an opportunity to share your thoughts, ideas, and suggestions, compare notes with others in a similar situation, a safe place to vent your feelings, and a way to feel less alone.

## Respite Care

Respite care is a service where another trained person or staff at a facility provide short-term care for a few hours to a few days for your loved one giving you some time away from caregiving.

Respite care can be in your home, through an adult day center, or at a residential care facility.

## It Only Takes a Phone Call

If any of these services sound interesting to you, call your local Family Caregiver Support Program. Caring and knowledgeable staff are familiar with the caregiver support programs and services available where you live and will help you get connected with whatever works best for you.

To find your local Family Caregiver Support Program, **call 1-800-422-3263** or visit our website at **[www.adsa.dshs.wa.gov](http://www.adsa.dshs.wa.gov)** (click on "Local Services").

**Take a step and make sure you have the emotional support you need today !**